

Molly McGuire

From: Casey O'Rourke <caseyhallorourke@gmail.com>
Sent: Tuesday, August 4, 2026 8:28 PM
To: Planning Commission; Alison Van Gorp; Council; Deb Estrada; molly.mcguire@mercerisland.com
Cc: johnsorourke@gmail.com; Casey O'Rourke
Subject: Re: Public Comment RE CPA25-002, RZN25-002, SEP25-021

Hello Mercer Island Planning Commission and City Council.

I experience significant traffic congestion multiple times each day at the intersection serving the JCC, Herzl Ner-Tamid Temple, and FASPS. This congestion occurs year-round and is especially problematic during the morning and afternoon peak periods, typically between 8:00-9:00 a.m. and 3:00-4:00 p.m. During these times, traffic frequently backs up toward the freeway exits, and vehicles leaving the JCC and FASPS parking lots often pull onto East Mercer Way with little opportunity to merge safely. I have witnessed numerous near misses involving vehicles, cyclists, and pedestrians.

Given these existing conditions, the prospect of adding a regional facility that would further increase traffic is deeply concerning. For years, I along with many residents have attended City Hall meetings regarding proposed developments and traffic solutions. We have repeatedly suggested directing traffic through the commercial driveways along 36th Street to reduce pressure on residential streets, yet no action has been taken on that proposal.

Adding additional traffic burden to a residential neighborhood is neither appropriate nor considerate of the families who live here and rely on these roads every day. Having lived on 97th Avenue SE, I know firsthand that our neighborhood streets are already used as cut-through routes by drivers traveling from Mercerwood. I fear that this proposal will only worsen those conditions.

I urge our elected and appointed officials, who are charged with protecting the interests and quality of life of Mercer Island residents, to deny this proposal. At a minimum, further traffic analysis, additional community engagement, and a more comprehensive planning process should occur before any action is taken. Decisions of this magnitude should not be rushed.

I wrote to many of you in June regarding these concerns. Just today, my husband received an email from Amy Lavin of the JCC offering a meeting opportunity. While we appreciate the outreach, it came barely 24 hours before this planning commission meeting. Without sufficient time for meaningful discussion, collaboration, and consideration of solutions that serve the broader Mercer Island community, the offer feels more symbolic than substantive.

I respectfully ask that you pause this process, continue engaging with residents and other city leaders, and allow the community the opportunity to work together toward a solution that balances the needs of all stakeholders.

My husband submitted the statement below, and I fully support and agree with the concerns and points he has raised and request you deny the proposed Comprehensive Plan Amendment and rezone because the applicant has not met the burden of demonstrating compliance with the applicable Comprehensive Plan, Growth Management Act, and Mercer Island City Code criteria.

Sincerely,

Kathleen Hall-O'Rourke

On Tue, Aug 4, 2026 at 5:20 PM <johnsorourke@gmail.com> wrote:

Hi – in advance of the August 5th meeting to discuss changing Comprehensive Plan of Mercer Island, specifically “**PCB 26-09: Public Hearing to Amend the Comprehensive Plan Land Use Map Designation from Single-Family to Commercial Office for Parcels 2655500137, 2655500136, 2655500132, and a portion of 2655500115 (CPA25-002)**” as it is stated in the Planning Commission Special Hybrid Meeting Agenda ([link](#)), I’m writing to express my concerns with this proposal to amend the Comprehensive Plan and change the designation from Single Family to Commercial Office.

I’ve written before with my concerns, and background context in the attached email. However, I’ve come to learn that the only comments that can be considered are those that specifically address the Mercer Island Comprehensive Plan. Therefore, I am submitting the following comments regarding CPA25-002, RZN25-002, and SEP25-021. I respectfully request denial of the proposed Comprehensive Plan Amendment and rezone because the applicant has not met the burden of demonstrating compliance with the applicable Comprehensive Plan, Growth Management Act, and Mercer Island City Code criteria.

Key Concerns

1. The application relies on the current use and operator rather than the proposed designation.

The applicant's justification is based on the property's existing use as a community center and the benefits currently provided by the SJCC. However, the proposed Comprehensive Plan Amendment and rezone would apply to the land itself, not to the current owner, programs, or operations. The application is not tied to a specific project, use, or enforceable restrictions, and nothing guarantees that the current uses cited by the applicant will continue in the future.

2. No binding commitments are offered to preserve the claimed community benefits.

The applicant has not proposed a Development Agreement or other legally binding mechanism that would limit future uses, cap building size, address access and traffic concerns, or otherwise ensure that the public benefits cited in support of the application remain in place. Without such commitments, the City's decision must be based on the full development potential of the requested designation.

3. The proposal is inconsistent with Comprehensive Plan goals regarding neighborhood character.

The Comprehensive Plan calls for preservation of neighborhood character, including the form, bulk, scale, and intensity of development in residential areas. The proposed redesignation would increase potential buildout capacity from approximately 94,723 square feet to 402,261 square feet, a more than fourfold increase that has not been analyzed in relation to surrounding single-family neighborhoods.

4. Transportation impacts have not been adequately evaluated.

The applicant's own Trip Generation Memo indicates that the rezone could increase traffic from approximately **245 trips per hour to 1,376 trips per hour**, an increase of more than **460%**. Despite the significance of this increase, no Traffic Impact Analysis has been provided. In addition:

- The analysis does not adequately account for traffic associated with the French American School of Puget Sound (FASPS), which shares access with the site.
- Existing parking and traffic impacts on neighboring residential streets have not been addressed.
- Potential future access from 97th Ave SE and SE 40th St. raises additional public safety concerns.
- The impacts on nearby schools, pedestrians, cyclists, and the I-90 corridor have not been fully evaluated.

5. The applicant has not demonstrated changed circumstances of the City as a whole.

The changed-circumstances criterion requires evidence of citywide changes, not changes affecting a single property or institution. The Staff Report rejects the applicant's primary rationale and concludes that the cited 2017 code changes do not constitute changed circumstances of the City as a whole. The remaining justification appears to be based on the needs of a single property and facility rather than broader citywide conditions.

6. The proposal is not a logical extension or transition of existing zoning.

The subject property is bordered on three sides by single-family residential zoning. The proposed rezone would create an isolated pocket of Commercial Office zoning within a predominantly residential area and would leave certain nearby residential parcels surrounded by non-residential designations. This creates an irregular zoning pattern rather than a logical transition between districts.

7. The applicant has not shown that Commercial Office is the most appropriate designation.

The application does not analyze alternative approaches, such as a Public Institution designation, Public Benefit Zone, community-facility overlay, or other mechanisms that could address the stated concerns while remaining more consistent with the surrounding residential context. The burden rests with the applicant to demonstrate that the requested designation is the most appropriate and consistent option.

8. The proposal raises concerns regarding public health, safety, and welfare.

The combination of substantially increased development potential, significant projected traffic growth, unaddressed parking impacts, and the absence of a comprehensive traffic analysis prevents a finding that the proposal will have no adverse effect on public health, safety, and welfare.

For these reasons, I respectfully request that the Planning Commission and City Council deny CPA25-002 and RZN25-002. At a minimum, the City should require a project-specific proposal, a complete Traffic Impact Analysis, and legally binding restrictions sufficient to ensure consistency with any findings relied upon to support approval.

Thank you for listening and for executing on your elected role to protect and represent the needs of the residents of Mercer Island and deliver on the mission, vision, and values of Mercer Island as stated on City Overview page on Mercer Island webpage: <https://www.mercerisland.gov/community/page/city-overview>

“We provide outstanding municipal services that enhance and protect the environment, the quality of life, and the community health, safety, and welfare on Mercer Island.”

Sincerely,

John O’Rourke

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